

# Evolution and inheritance

Vocabulary	Definition
offspring	The young animal or plant that is produced by the reproduction of that species.
inheritance	When characteristics are passed on to offspring from their parents.
variations	The differences between individuals within a species.
characteristics	The distinguishing features or qualities that are specific to a species.
evolution	Adaptation over a very long time.
natural selection	The process where organisms that are better adapted to their environment tend to survive and produce more offspring.
fossil	The remains or imprint of a prehistoric plant or animal, embedded in rock and preserved.

## What are inherited characteristics?

When living things reproduce they pass on characteristics to their offspring. This is known as inheritance.

You've probably noticed that you might look like your parents. This is because you inherit key characteristics from them, like your eye colour, skin colour and height.

## Are offspring identical to their parents?

All living things produce offspring of the same kind, but normally offspring are not identical to their parents; there are variations that make them different.

For example, if you cross two different breeds of dog, you get a dog with a combination of characteristics. Some characteristics come from their mother and some from their father.

## What is evolution?

Evolution is the gradual process by which different kinds of living organism have developed from earlier forms over millions of years.

Charles Darwin put forward the theory of evolution when he discovered different varieties of a bird called a finch—they had different beaks as they had adapted to survive on their particular island.



## What can we learn from fossils?

Fossils are the preserved remains, or partial remains, of ancient animals and plants. Fossils let scientists know how plants and animals used to look millions of years ago. This is proof that living things have evolved over time.

